

PON-09-007 Questions and Answers

February 16, 2010

I. Questions about Funding

1. When will funding be available to grant recipients?
Funding will be available to a recipient after the Energy Commission approves the grant at a business meeting and both sides sign it. We estimate taking these grants to the October 17, 2010 business meeting. The time it takes after that to sign the grant depends on how long the recipient takes to review it. For planning purposes, assume grants will start at the end of October or beginning of November.
2. Can bidders get compensated for early work (e.g., in June when the Commission announces awards)?
No. Grant recipients can only receive payment for work performed during the grant term.
3. How are the grant funds paid -- periodically throughout the work or a lump sum at the end?
Grant funds are paid on a reimbursement basis usually monthly, but some entities prefer quarterly.
4. How does the state budget situation affect this PON's funding? How stable is this funding?
The PIER funds have some protection because they come from special funds and not the general fund. The Governor can borrow but not permanently take special funds. This has happened once in PIER's history, and we have no way to know if it will happen again.

II. Questions about Bidders

5. Are bidders penalized if they are currently involved in a permitting issue?
No. Disclosure of permitting issues is required but does not result in disqualification or other penalization.
6. Can private entities subcontract to federal agencies?
Private entities must be the prime contractor and may have federal agencies and other public entities as subcontractors.
7. Can sole proprietors apply to this solicitation?
Yes.

8. Is this PON only open to private entities?
Only private entities can submit proposals to this PON, but proposals can include public-entity subcontractors. A grant opportunity for this subject that is targeted for public entities is forthcoming.
9. Regarding the separate grant opportunity for public entities for this subject area:
- A. Will it result in direct competition between private and public sector proposals?
No. The proposals received from each effort will be evaluated separately.
- B. Will it address the same questions?
Yes.
- C. Could it result in awards for the same project?
No. Duplicative efforts may not be funded twice, but different approaches to the same topic may be funded.
- D. Is the funding amount equal?
Yes.

III. Other Administrative Questions

10. Will staff circulate the workshop attendees' contact info?
The contact information of those who provided it for sharing purposes is listed in the table at the end of this document.
11. Is there a small business or minority business requirement?
No, grants do not have this requirement.
12. Is there a grant end date or is the grant period open-ended?
The grant period is open ended except that it cannot end later than June 30, 2015. This PON does not require a specific project end date, but the funds have a time limit.
13. Is it better or preferable to combine several not-necessarily related projects into one proposal or keep them separate?
It depends on the logistics on your part; it is up to you.
14. Is there a mailing list or listserver for future solicitations?
Go to <http://www.energy.ca.gov/listservers/> and sign up for the "Research" and "Opportunity" listservers.

15. Once the research is complete, will the results be publicly available through Energy Commission? Or will it be in a peer-reviewed journal?

Yes, completed reports are required and will be posted on the Energy Commission website, and we strongly encourage publication in peer-reviewed journals.

16. Are the 8-page phase I abstracts made available to the public?

After the posting of the Notice of Proposed Awards at the end of phase II, all submitted documents including abstracts become publically available.

17. Is it true that no info in the proposal can be considered proprietary?

Yes. As stated on page 17 of the PON application manual:

“NO confidential information will be accepted during the proposal and selection phase of this solicitation. If any confidential information is submitted, the entire proposal **WILL** be rejected and not be eligible for funding.”

In addition, after the posting of the Notice of Proposed Awards in phase II, all submitted documents become publically available.

18. Will evidence of partnerships with permitting agencies play a role in scoring?

Scoring is based on the criteria in the PON application package. However, we encourage collaboration with all public entities.

IV. Technical Questions

19. Regarding item E in the PON application package, where is the existing framework for studying cumulative impacts described?

There is not consistency on what framework or methodology is used. This lack of an accepted framework and biologically meaningful boundaries for cumulative impact analysis is what the item is trying to address.

20. Regarding topic B, are you interested in predicting potential distributions or actual distributions (i.e., suitable habitat, whether occupied or not, or **ONLY** occupied habitat)?

We are interested in both current and suitable habitat that has a high probability of being occupied.

21. Should the approach to cumulative analysis conform to requirements of NEPA, CEQA, and FESA?

The research does not have to specifically address NEPA/CEQA/FESA. However, our goal for this research is for it to be relevant to siting and permitting.

22. Will proposals that test innovative solar development that involves avoidance of resources be consistent with research targeted in item A?

Possibly; we are interested in research that would address how best to accomplish avoidance. We are interested in advancing science and technology, and there will be another solicitation from the Renewables group of PIER that specifically focuses on the technology improvements related to large-scale renewable energy development.

23. Are there limitations on what the Energy Commission can consider regarding cumulative impacts because the Commission only decides based on the record for each project?

There are not limitations to the research based on how the Commission decides on siting cases. PIER research aims to inform future siting and permitting. If the results of the research are available and used in a siting case, it becomes part of the record.

24. Will preference be given to projects that show how their work will contribute to existing BLM or Western Governors Association (WREZ) work? If not, how do you envision synergies with these efforts? How will you avoid duplication of their work?

Proposals will be scored according to the criteria already provided in the PON application package.

25. Where is the best source to find the research questions that you are most seeking answers to?

On page 6 of the PON application package.

26. Is it more favorable to do a PV or solar thermal project?

No. We are looking for research that mitigates the impact of utility scale solar projects.

27. What information is there on location of planned and proposed solar facilities?

Bidders can run individual queries on Bureau of Land Management's website using its BLM Geocommunicator tool. In addition, the Energy Commission's Siting Division website shows solar thermal projects under Energy Commission jurisdiction.

28. Can research be located on proposed or permitted sites?

Yes, as long as you have all the agreements in place with the land owner and other relevant parties. A permission letter would likely be sufficient. See page 34 criteria 6 of Phase I and page 38 criteria 6 of Phase II in the PON application package.

29. Just to clarify, you want a framework for studying cumulative impacts, not an actual comparison of current project impacts, correct?

Yes.

30. I am involved in a large, complex research project that is very germane to what the Energy Commission is looking for in the solicitation. The project is funded by the US Army via contract. There are a few aspects of the question not being addressed by our project that would be useful to the needs of the Energy Commission. Can costs associated with relevant aspects of the larger project be applied as matching funds, and can supplies and materials we have acquired on that project and would use on the Energy Commission-funded work be counted as in-kind services?

Only time, materials, supplies, and equipment directly needed and used for the Energy Commission portion of the larger research project can count as in-kind match. The match portion of the project must be included in the work statement and considered reasonable.

31. Is there a list of special-status plant and animal species that the Energy Commission has generated for these desert solar projects?

The research should focus on state or federally listed species as well as those not formally listed but of conservation concern, such as CNPS List 1B and 2 plants, and state species of special concern.

V. Participant Contact Information

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